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John D. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, edited by Luke Ben Tallon (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2011) xv+186 pp. £19.99/\$34.95. ISBN 978-0-567-32660-7 (pbk).

This collection brings together material previously published by the Greek Orthodox bishop Metropolitan John of Pergamon in *Sourozh* and elsewhere, and includes two chapters newly translated by the editor from their original French. As presented in other works, Zizioulas's theology sometimes feels rather abstract, so it is instructive to see him here address a tangible dimension of ecclesial life, and in so doing, ecological issues. In the compilation he begins by laying out the biblical foundations of his eucharistic theology. The paucity of sources makes this no easy task: the Eucharist was first transmitted as a lived practice rather than by written texts and rubrics, and like the Lord's Prayer, with which it was intimately linked, was highly secretive. These facts are of more than merely methodological import. There remains a proper theological sense, Zizioulas insists, in which the Eucharist is a closed celebration, an event taking place behind closed doors in opposition to the world, although not in separation from the world. This is a consequence of the crisis within creation that is expressed in baptism, which 'forms the *border* between the eucharistic community and the world' (p. 37). From the biblical testimony Zizioulas gains the further key theological insight that the Eucharist follows directly on Pentecost (Acts 2.46-7), which provides its 'natural atmosphere' (p. 7). It is in the Spirit that two key dimensions the Eucharist, memorial and resurrection, are combined: the Spirit who in John's Farewell Discourse will teach and remind the disciples about Christ once he departs from them is equally the Spirit of Romans 8 by whom Christ was raised from the dead and dwells in them.

In the second chapter, 'The Eucharist and the kingdom of God', Zizioulas mounts an extensive engagement with the liturgy. In his words: 'The basic liturgical rubrics and actions

are not ornamental trappings of the mystery: they are the very backbone of the mystery' (p. 75). Here is unfolded a liturgical theology that is rooted in detailed liturgical scholarship but which develops and engages constructive theology. At all times Zizioulas preserves a comprehensive frame of reference: all ministry, all liturgical action and all theology, if they are to make sense, must make reference to Christ. Furthermore, situated within this single Christic whole, every ministry, both lay and ordained, needs every other. For instance, to proclaim the 'Amen' at the culmination of the anaphora is the laity's 'sacred right' (pp. 73, 19, 196) as affirmed by Justin Martyr (cf. 1 Cor. 14.16), without which this prayer would be incomplete.

The book's unifying thread is an intense eschatological sensibility that contrasts sharply with the common Western assumption that Orthodox worship is, as with Dionysius, about static mystery. In fact, Zizioulas argues repeatedly, this view stands in need of correction by the eschatology of Maximus the Confessor. Just as the kiss of peace points forward to a future true peace, the shimmering gold vestments of the monk who is usually attired in threadbare rags intimate a future glory. In the third chapter the reader is reminded that liturgical symbolism is ultimately not typological, interpreting present realities by making reference to an historic past, but iconological, inaugurating a future consummation (p. 88). When understood in this fashion as an 'eschatological invasion' (p. 130) the Eucharist is seen rightly as bringing judgment. Just as the eucharistic gifts are chosen and set apart from worldly things, believers are urged to set themselves apart from the sins for which they would otherwise be judged by God by seeking reconciliation before receiving those gifts.

In this context, to receive the Eucharist is a bold act with great consequences. To refuse someone communion, or even to excommunicate them, should not therefore, Zizioulas insists, be understood as bringing about exclusion or condemnation. Rather, the judgment of excommunication may be viewed pastorally as an attempt to prevent a believer eating and

drinking a far worse divine judgment on themselves (1 Cor. 11). Such an emphasis is clearly at odds with many current agendas, according to which the value of worship is instrumental rather than intrinsic. Zizioulas asserts emphatically: ‘The Eucharistic gathering can never be a means and instrument of mission, because in the last times, which it represents, there will be no mission; anyway, mission presupposes dispersal, not a gathering “in one place”’ (p. 48).

The Eucharist nevertheless has social, political and ecological corollaries. These come through most clearly in chapter 7, ‘Proprietors or priests of creation?’, which was first delivered at the Baltic Sea Symposium on Religion, Science and the Environment in 2003. Zizioulas here argues that the current ecological crisis is not a problem of ethics, as commonly supposed, but a problem of culture. This suggests that it will be best addressed not by a new set of moral or legal rules governing behaviour but by a transformation of how humans view and inhabit the world. The idea that the priest makes a sacrificial offering back to God of his own creation is prominent in eucharistic liturgies such as that of Saint John Chrysostom, which does not focus as much as medieval Western equivalents on Christ’s sacrifice of himself on the Cross. So priesthood is an activity of offering, transformation, synthesis and completion. It may, as such, be viewed as an art. By recovering a sense of priesthood as art, Zizioulas suggests, the utilitarian exploitation of nature may be avoided and the classic dichotomy between preservation and development may be overcome. When humans exercise their priesthood, new realities are created from the raw material of nature as they collect together elements of a diversified and fragmented world and form them into a unified and harmonious whole, that is, into a true cosmos.

In this book Zizioulas makes an impassioned and convincing case for the fundamental importance of the liturgy in Church life. Indeed, he argues that anciently the Church, far from being an abstract category of theology, was nothing other than the gathering together of believers in Christ for the eucharistic celebration. The Church was universal because there

was only one celebration in each city (pp. 15–16), rather than, for instance, because it safeguarded within its ministerial structure a pristine deposit of faith. The Church did, however, possess a liturgical deposit in which primary truths were preserved and communicated. It remains unclear how Zizioulas would regard worshipping communities that do not embrace the particular liturgical tradition that is generative of his own rich theology, as well as those for whom regarding priesthood as an art might have social and political implications that impel liturgical change.

Produced on different occasions and gathered together here for the first time, the chapters sometimes feel repetitive. Yet what is striking, especially given that they contain material produced across a period of 35 years (from 1969 to 2003), is their high degree of theological consistency. Here one looks into a mind shaped by an ancient, unchanging liturgy that is generative of profound theological and spiritual insight. There are instructive methodological lessons here for those who seek to construct their theology on less firm foundations.

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